

Child Protection Conference

a guide for parents and carers

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Can I bring someone with me?

You can bring a friend, relative or solicitor with you for support if you wish, but they must understand that they are not there to give an opinion unless they are asked for it.

If you need an interpreter or signer your child's Social Worker will make arrangements for a suitable person to be invited.

What if I can't attend?

We always do our best to arrange conferences at a time that is convenient to parents as your views are very important. The people at the meeting are there to help you and your child and need to know what you would find helpful.

Your child's Social Worker will help you sort out practical arrangements such as transport or child care so that you can come to the conference.

If you feel that you cannot come to the conference if your ex-partner is there, arrangements can be made for you to come into the conference separately.

If you find the idea of attending the conference too difficult you should talk to your child's Social Worker about other ways of letting people at the conference know what you think.

A Child in Need Plan

Sometimes the Child Protection Conference members will decide that your child is not at serious risk of harm and that your child does not need a child protection plan.

It may be that you and your family need some help and support even though you are not at risk of harm; when this happens conference members suggest a child in need plan and a smaller group will meet regularly with you and your family to make sure that you are doing as well as you can. The support should go on until you no longer need it.

What if I disagree with the decision?

If you are unhappy about the decision made by the conference, or you wish to give particular praise for the efforts of one or more of the workers involved with your child, you may say so and this will be recorded in the minutes.

If you want to complain or comment about the way the conference was handled, or about the conduct of any of the workers involved you can ask for a Complaints and Comments leaflet which gives details of what to do.

The plan will say

- ▶ What Children's Social Care and all the other agencies must do to help your child and your family
- ▶ What you and your family can do to improve the situation
- ▶ That the chair will make sure that everyone knows what is expected of them

Who will know whether my child has a plan of protection?

Confidentiality is very important and the conference chair will remind people present about this. We take great care to make sure that only those people who need to know, so that they can help you and your child, are given the information.

What happens next?

If a child protection plan is made a group of people, called the core group will meet together with you to make sure that everyone is doing what they agreed in the plan and that your child is safe and properly cared for. After three months there will be another conference to see whether your child still needs a plan of protection and if so whether it needs to be changed.

You will be given a 'Take Part' form to complete or you may want to write a letter or make a recording for the conference.

You will get a written record of the conference even if you do not attend. Your child's Social Worker will discuss the decisions made with you as soon as possible after the meeting.

Will my child be there?

If your child is at secondary school and they wish to attend and we all agree that it would be helpful for them to be there, they can be invited to attend all or part of the meeting. They too can bring a supporter with them and will be shown copies of reports written for the conference.

Children of all ages are always encouraged to share their views with the conference by filling in the 'Take Part' form or in any other way they choose.

Who will be in charge of the meeting?

The meeting will be chaired by a Safeguarding Children Manager who will not have had any part in the child protection investigation or in managing the staff involved. You will meet with the chair before the meeting, he/she will explain how the meeting will run and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

How long will it last?

It is difficult to say exactly how long each meeting will last but a first (initial) conference is likely to last for about one and a half hours and possibly longer. Review conferences are usually shorter.

What happens at the meeting?

The Child Protection Conference will follow a set agenda so that everyone is clear about

- ▶ The allegations, incident or concerns that led to the enquiries
- ▶ The enquiries that have been made and what they showed
- ▶ Any further information
- ▶ The nature of the risk to your child

The chair will give everyone, including you, the opportunity to speak and to ask questions. You will be given the chance to challenge anything that is said about you. There may be certain things that have to be discussed during the conference that are, for some reason, confidential. At these times you and your supporter will be asked to leave the room, normally the chair will have told you in advance if this is likely to happen.

What can a Child Protection Conference decide?

The Child Protection Conference members have to decide whether your child is at serious risk of harm and whether he or she should have a 'multi agency protection plan'.

The chair of the conference will decide whether the risk of harm should be described as 'physical abuse', sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. If the conference decides that your child does not need a protection plan it may be felt that you and your child would benefit from some additional support which is known as a Child In Need Plan.

What is a child protection plan?

If the members of the Child Protection Conference decide that your child is at risk of harm they will start to make a protection plan which will set out what is needed to make sure they are safe and properly cared for.